



AT A GLANCE

Healthy Aging

Preventing Disease and Improving Quality of Life Among Older Americans 2006



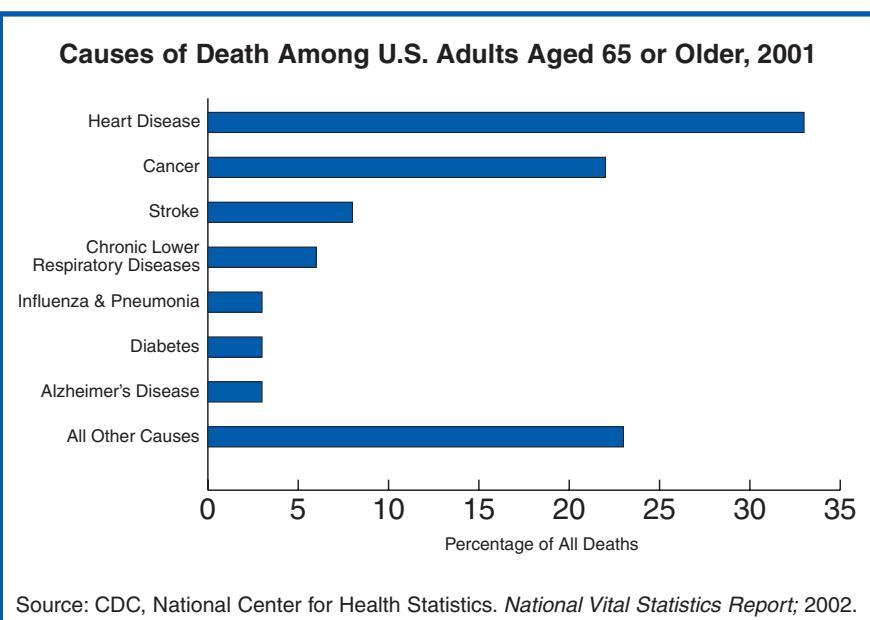
"The aging of the U.S. population is one of the major public health challenges of the 21st century. With more than 70 million baby boomers in the United States poised to join the ranks of those aged 65 or over, the prevention of disease and injury is one of the few tools available to reduce the expected growth of health care and long-term care costs."

*Julie Louise Gerberding, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

The Health and Economic Effects of an Aging Society

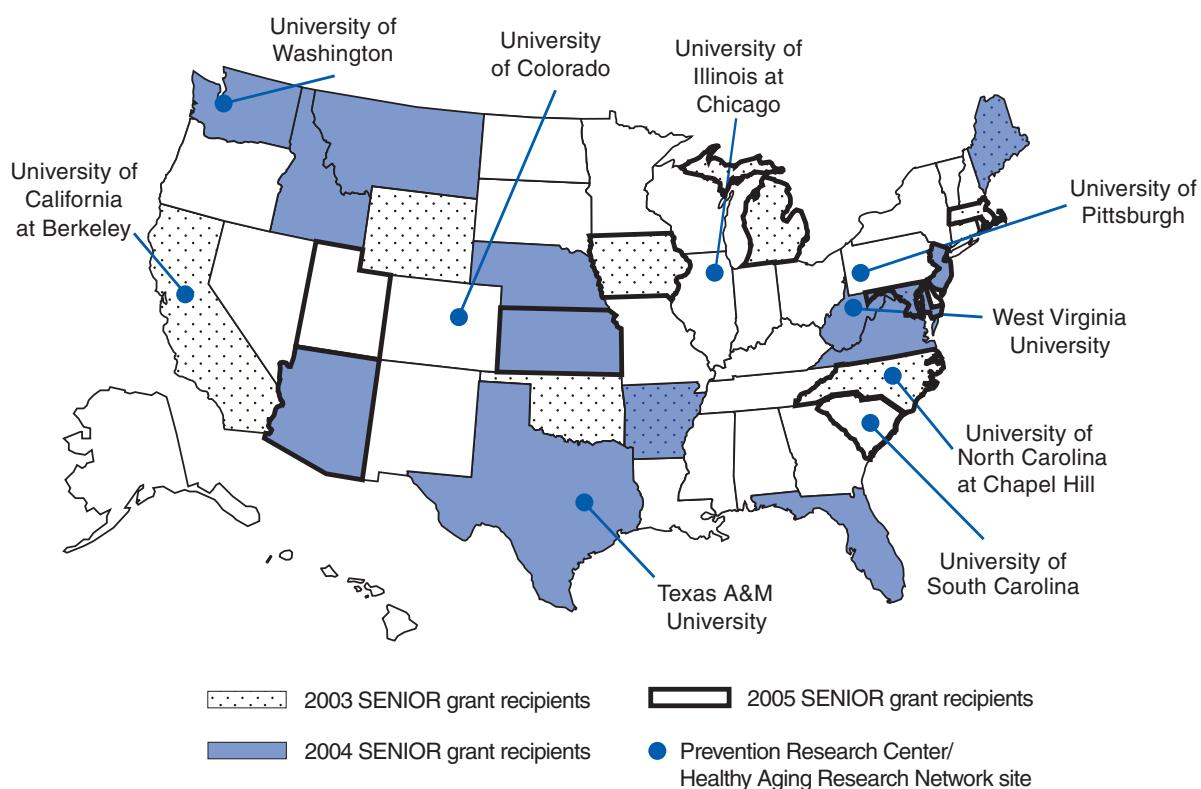
One hundred years ago, only 3 million people (4%) in this country were over the age of 65. Today, more than 36 million Americans are in this age group, and that number is expected to grow over the next 25 years to over 70 million as baby boomers age. In addition, the seniors of the future will be even more racially and ethnically diverse than today's seniors.

The aging of America is triggering a higher demand for health care and social services. Currently, about 80% of older adults have at least one chronic condition, and 50% have at least two. These conditions can cause years of disability, pain, and loss of function. Three million older adults indicate that they cannot perform basic activities of daily living such as bathing, shopping, dressing, and eating. Their quality of life suffers as a result, and demands on family and caregivers can be challenging. Because the population will be older and greater in number in the coming years, overall U.S. health care costs are projected to increase 25% by 2030. Preventing health problems is one of the few



known ways to stem rising health care costs. By preventing disease and injury, we also can help seniors remain independent for as long as possible, which can improve their quality of life and delay the need for costly long-term care.

Selected CDC-Supported Healthy Aging Programs, FY 2003–2005



Opportunities to Improve Older Americans' Health and Quality of Life

Poor health and loss of independence are *not* inevitable consequences of aging. The following strategies have proven effective in improving the health of older adults:

- *Healthy lifestyles.* Research has shown that healthy lifestyle behaviors, such as being physically active, eating a healthy diet, and not smoking, are more influential than genetic factors in helping older people avoid the deterioration traditionally associated with aging.
- *Early detection of diseases.* Screening to detect chronic diseases early in their course, when they are most treatable, can save lives; however, many older adults have not had all of the recommended screenings covered by Medicare.
- *Immunizations.* About 36,000 people aged 65 or older die each year of influenza and invasive pneumococcal disease.

Immunizations can reduce a person's risk for hospitalization and death from these diseases.

- *Injury prevention.* Falls are the most common cause of injuries to older adults. More than one-third of adults aged 65 or older fall each year, and of those who fall, 20%–30% suffer moderate to severe injuries that decrease mobility and independence.
- *Self-management techniques.* Programs to teach older adults self-management techniques can reduce both the pain and costs of chronic disease. For example, people with arthritis can learn practical skills such as how to manage their pain, how to deal with fatigue and stress, and how to develop a personal exercise program.

CDC's Role in Promoting Healthy Aging

CDC is committed to ensuring that all people, especially those at greater risk for health disparities, will achieve their optimal lifespan with the best possible quality of health in every stage of life. With new health protection goals that support healthy people in healthy places across all life stages, CDC is setting the agenda to enable people to enjoy a healthy life by delaying death and the onset of illness and disability by accelerating improvements in public health.

Within CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the Healthy Aging Program serves as the focal point for older adult health. The Healthy Aging Program is engaged in many activities designed to provide a comprehensive approach to health promotion and disease prevention for older adults. It also has developed five ways to implement this approach, often in collaboration with other CDC programs, such as injury prevention and adult immunization.

1. *Providing high-quality health information.* CDC provides reliable, science-based, high-quality information on the health of seniors for policy makers, public health and aging professionals, the media, and consumers through publications, conferences, training sessions, and Web sites/listservs. The Healthy Aging Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/aging>) also provides valuable information and is regularly updated. Working with the American Society on Aging, the Healthy Aging Program engages journalists across the country on issues such as arthritis, immunizations, and fall prevention.

2. *Facilitating the prevention efforts of health care providers and others who serve older adults.* Medicare pays for many critical preventive services, yet fewer than 1 in 10 adults aged 65 years or older receive all recommended screenings and immunizations. CDC's Healthy Aging Program supports a model program called SPARC (Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration), which has shown significant success in broadening the use of preventive services. SPARC works to promote public access to services, help medical practices provide preventive services, and strengthen local accountability for service delivery.

Myth
Health inevitably declines as we get older.
Reality
People of any age can improve their health by adopting healthy behaviors.

SPARC currently operates in counties in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York, where it serves as a local bridge between public health, aging services, and the health care system.

- Among its successes is doubling the use of mammography screening among targeted populations in these states.
3. *Integrating public health prevention expertise with the reach of the aging services network.* As described in the Older Americans Act, CDC has an advisory role to the aging services network, which reaches seniors in virtually every U.S. community. To take full advantage of opportunities to improve the health of older adults, the Healthy Aging Program strives to integrate public health's expertise in research, health tracking, and programs with the experience and reach of the aging services network.

For instance, CDC and the Administration on Aging (AOA), in collaboration with the Chronic Disease Directors and the National Association of State Units on Aging, funded 35 grants to promote partnerships between state health departments and state units on aging during fiscal years 2003–2005. In fiscal year 2006, CDC and AOA will continue using these State-based Examples of Network Innovation, Opportunity, and Replication (SENIOR) grants to support evidence-based programs at state and local levels.

4. *Identifying and putting into practice what works in prevention.* Research shows that if seniors maintain just three healthy habits—moderate physical activity, good nutrition, and no smoking—they can delay disability by as much as 10 years. The benefits of such research, however, will never be realized unless this knowledge is applied to programs in communities. The Healthy Aging Program supports the Healthy Aging Research Network, a subset of CDC's Prevention Research Centers, to implement a prevention research agenda for older adult

health. Current work includes an evidence-based review of interventions for depression and development of a tool that communities can use to assess environmental barriers, resources, and opportunities for physical activity.

5. *Monitoring changes in the health of older Americans.* CDC is the lead national agency responsible for collecting data and monitoring changes over time in the health of older Americans. This information helps strengthen efforts to prevent disease, disability, and injury, and it identifies health-related disparities among different groups of older adults. In 2004, CDC released *The State of Aging and Health in America 2004*, which was developed with the Merck Institute of Aging & Health and The Gerontological Society of America. This report provides national and state data on 15 key indicators related to older adult health and rates the nation and the states on how well they are meeting national *Healthy People 2000* targets. In addition, the report includes examples of successful strategies for improving the health and quality of life of older adults.

New Frontiers: Healthy Brain Initiative

While the role of public health in improving and maintaining the physical health of older adults is well-known, its role in improving and maintaining cognitive and emotional health as people age is just beginning to be defined. In fiscal year 2005, Congress appropriated funds to CDC's Healthy Aging Program to address brain health and Alzheimer's disease, with a focus on lifestyle issues. In response, CDC formed a new partnership with the Alzheimer's Association to collaborate on a multifaceted approach to brain health. This collaboration, which will involve other key partners, will allow both organizations to identify public health opportunities and develop a road map of recommended strategies to address brain health. CDC also has funded the Healthy Aging Research Network to conduct formative research to identify how older adults understand brain health issues and which health promotion and disease prevention approaches related to brain health the public finds most appealing.

Future Directions

State and local health departments, the aging services network, and organizations that serve older adults look to CDC for scientific and programmatic expertise in strategies that reduce long-term care needs and preserve health and quality of life for seniors. In response, CDC and its partners will

- Provide data on the health status and health behaviors of older adults, with an emphasis on health disparities. Develop additional surveillance measures that address gaps in data on health status, health needs, and quality of life at the end of life.
- Expand prevention research efforts to foster the development of evidence-based health promotion programs and strategies available for community practice, particularly in the areas of cognition, nutrition, and the delivery of preventive services.
- Develop opportunities for professionals to become more knowledgeable about and skilled at using data for action, implementing evidence-based health promotion interventions, and communicating the importance of healthy lifestyles and advance care planning to older adults.

For more information or additional copies of this document, please contact
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
4770 Buford Highway NE, Mail Stop K-51, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717
Telephone: (770) 488-5464 • Fax: (770) 488-5486
E-mail: ccdinfo@cdc.gov • Web: <http://www.cdc.gov/aging>